

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFO, YO, US

SUBJECT: HARRIMAN PRESS CONFERENCE AT BGGREB AIRPORT SEPTEMBER 27

REKPC BELGRADE 6369

1. FOLLOWING TWO DAYS' STAY ON BRIONI AND AT THE END OF HIS 5-DAY VISIT TO YUGOSLAVIA, AVERELL HARRIMAN, ACCOMPANIED BY HIS WIFE AND PETER SWIERS, STOPPED IN ZAGREB SEPTEMBER 27 TO CHANGE PLANES EN ROUTE TO LONDON. HARRIMAN WAS MET AT AIRPORT BY CONSUL GENERAL, PRESIDENT OF CROATIAN COUNCIL FOR FOREIGN RELATIONS (LJUBO MAJERIC), AND GROUP OF YUGOSLAV TELEVISION, RADIO, AND NEWSPAPER REPORTERS. DURING STOPOVER, HARRIMAN HELD HALF-HOUR PRESS CONFERENCE. CAREFUL SECURITY PRECAUTIONS WERE EVIDENT.

2. ALL ZAGREB SEPTEMBER 28 NEWSPAPERS REPORTED ON HARRIMAN'S PRESS CONFERENCE. SPECIAL ATTENTION IN EACH STORY WAS DEVOTED TO HARRIMAN'S COMMENTS ABOUT RECENT TWA HIJACKING BY CROATIAN EXTREMISTS AND TO HIS EXPRESSION OF THE AMERICAN DESIRE THAT NON-ALIGNED YUGOSLAVIA REMAIN INDEPENDENT, UNITED AND STRONG. HARRIMAN IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT HIJACKING AND MURDER OF POLICEMAN WERE "DISGUSTING" ACTIONS AND THAT AMERICAN PUBLIC HELD ONLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONTEMPT FOR THE HIJACKERS. ALSO REPORTED WAS HARRIMAN'S

OBSERVATION THAT EMIGRE GROUP COULD NOT HAVE HARMED ITSELF MORE IN THE EYES OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THAN BY DOING WHAT IT DID.

3. AMONG ITEMS LOCAL PRESS DID NOT REPORT WAS HARRIMAN'S STATEMENT THAT "THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF MISUNDERSTANDING HERE ABOUT THE ATTITUDE OF THE US GOVERNMENT" REGARDING THE HI-JACKING. HARRIMAN EMPHASIZED THAT USG HAD BEEN CONCERNED WITH SAVING THE LIVES OF AMERICAN CITIZENS AND THAT PROBABLY THE ONLY ONES WHO READ HIJACKERS' LEAFLETS WERE THOSE WHO PRINTED THEM.

4. IN CONCLUDING HIS PRESS CONFERENCE, HARRIMAN EXPRESSED GRATITUDE TO PRESIDENT TITO FOR THE WARM HOSPITALITY EXTENDED TO HIM IN YUGOSLAVIA. HARRIMAN SAID HE HAD BEEN TOLD THAT TITO HAD INSTRUCTED HIS COLLEAGUES IN MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR HIS VISIT. HARRIMAN REGRETTED THAT TITO'S ILLNESS HAD PREVENTED HIM FROM MEETING TITO BUT MENTIONED THAT HE HAD RECEIVED AN INVITATION TO RETURN TO YUGOSLAVIA AND HOPED TO DO SO SOON.

5. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH THE CONSUL GENERAL, HARRIMAN SAID THAT HE IS COMPLETING HIS REPORT ON HIS MEETINGS WITH YUGOSLAV LEADERS WHICH HE WOULD SUBMIT TO SECRETARY KISSINGER AS WELL AS TO GOVERNOR CARTER. HE SAID HE WOULD PROBABLY SEND HIS REPORT FROM LONDON. KAISER

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